

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ECLA SESSION ON HONDURAS

FOLLOWING ARE SUGGESTED REMARKS FOR USE AS APPROPRIATE
BY AMBASSADOR FERGUSON AT ECLA MEETING ON HONDURAS
OCT 21:

I SPEAK NOT ONLY FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES
BUT FOR HER PEOPLE AS WELL IN EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY
WITH THE NOBLE PEOPLE OF HONDURAS WHO HAVE SUFFERED SO
MUCH AS A RESULT OF HURRICANE FIFI. PERHAPS WE WILL NEVER
KNOW PRECISELY HOW MANY LIVES WERE LOST IN THAT TERRIBLE
DISASTER, HOW MANY THOUSANDS OF HONDURANS WERE LEFT
HOMELESS IN ITS WAKE, HOW MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN
PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY VANISHED WHEN THE WINDS AND RAINS OF
FIFI DEVASTATED THE COASTLANDS AND FERTILE VALLEYS OF
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NORTHERN HONDURAS. WE DO KNOW THAT FOR THE POOR PEOPLE

OF HONDURAS THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DISASTER ARE ENORMOUS AND THAT THEY HAVE CREATED AN UNDENIABLY PRESSING NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AND RECOVERY ASSISTANCE. THE DISTINGUISHED DELEGATE FROM HONDURAS HAS ALREADY SPOKEN OF THE KINDS AND LEVELS OF HELP HIS COUNTRY WILL REQUIRE AND HE HAS TOLD US OF THE BRAVE EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF HONDURAS TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO DEAL WITH

THE IMMEDIATE AND LONGER-TERM EMERGENCY PROBLEMS. THE MEETING TODAY WAS CALLED BY THE DISTINGUISHED EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING WHAT HONDURAS' SISTER STATES AND APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES HAVE CONTRIBUTED OR WILL CONTRIBUTE TO AID THE PEOPLE OF HONDURAS TO SURVIVE AND RECOVER FROM THIS TRAGEDY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM PROUD TO BE ABLE TO REPORT THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PROMINENT AMONG THE MANY LARGE AND SMALL COUNTRIES THAT REACTED QUICKLY AND GENEROUSLY TO THE DESPERATE NEEDS OF THE HONDURAN PEOPLES IN THE FIRST HOURS AND DAYS AFTER FIFI STRUCK ITS TERRIBLE BLOW. WITH FULL APPRECIATION OF THE GENUINELY MAGNANIMOUS RESPONSE OF OTHER NATIONS IN THIS DIRE EMERGENCY, I WOULD LIKE TO REVIEW HERE THE SCALE AND VARIETY OF THE UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO HELP THE HONDURAN PEOPLE FIND RELIEF FROM THE AGONY AND SUFFERING CAUSED BY FIFI.

EVEN BEFORE THE HURRICANE-ASSOCIATED RAINS HAD STOPPED, U.S. AMBASSADOR PHILLIP SANCHEZ HAD TRANSMITTED TO THE US GOVERNMENT AN OFFICIAL HONDURAN REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS.

WITHIN HOURS AFTER RECEIPT OF THAT APPEAL THE USG DISPATCHED TWO DISASTER SURVEY TEAMS TO HONDURAS TO HELP DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE AND THE DIMENSIONS OF ASSISTANCE REQUIRED. THESE WERE FOLLOWED BY THE ASSIGNMENT OF FOUR HELICOPTERS, TWO TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT, AND FOUR BOATS FOR USE IN RESCUE AND EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICINE DISTRIBUTION MISSIONS. U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE FLOWN INTO HONDURAS WITH RADIOS TO HELP ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK. U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT COMMENCED IMMEDIATELY A SERIES OF

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MERCY FLIGHTS WHICH OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AIRLIFTED TO HONDURAS ALMOST 200 TONS OF RELIEF SUPPLIES INCLUDING FOOD, BLANKETS, SHEETS, TENTS, PORTABLE KITCHENS, INSECTICIDES, FUEL, AND CLOTHING. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO AUTHORIZED OR SHIPPED TO HONDURAS ALMOST 2000 METRIC TONS OF FOOD SUPPLIES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE EMERGENCY. BETWEEN SEPT 19 AND OCTOBER 1, THE TOTAL VALUE OF U.S. GOVERNMENT DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS EX-

CEDED \$1,600,000.

AS SIGNIFICANT AS OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-HURRICANE RELIEF OPERATIONS, IT HAS NOT CONSTITUTED THE ONLY OR EVEN THE MAJOR UNITED STATES' RESPONSE TO THE EMERGENCY. I AM REFERRING, OF COURSE, TO THE CHARACTERISTICALLY GENEROUS AND SPONTANEOUS DONATION OF FUNDS AND COMMODITIES BY PRIVATE U.S. CITIZENS

AND THE PROVISION OF RELIEF SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, FUNDS, PERSONNEL, AND TRANSPORT BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND BY PRIVATE GROUPS AND U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES. WE DO NOT KNOW AND WILL NEVER KNOW THE FULL MONETARY VALUE OF PRIVATE CITIZENS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RELIEF EFFORT BECAUSE THESE CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE POURED INTO HONDURAS THROUGH SO MANY DIFFERENT CHANNELS. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED WITHOUT COMPLETE SUCCESS TO MAINTAIN A RECORD OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE MANY PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN THE UNITED STATES, AND WE KNOW THAT THE VALUE OF THIS ASSISTANCE EXCEEDS \$5 MILLION. I CANNOT MENTION ALL OF THE ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED BUT I WOULD LIKE TO PAY PARTICULAR TRIBUTE TO THE VERY SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS, CARE, CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES, THE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE SALVATION ARMY, THE STATE OF ALABAMA, AND THE SISTER CITIES PROGRAM.

AS A CLEAR INDICATION OF HIS GREAT CONCERN OVER THE EFFECTS OF THIS DISASTER PRESIDENT FORD SENT TWO PERSONAL EMISSARIES TO HONDURAS ON SEPTEMBER 28 TO ASSESS THE IMMEDIATE RELIEF REQUIREMENTS AND TO SURVEY LONGER TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION NEEDS. THE EMISSARIES, MESSRS. HERMAN KLEINE, AND RUSSELL MCCLURE REPORTED THEIR FINDINGS TO PRESIDENT FORD PERSONALLY ON OCTOBER 7. THEY RECOM-

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MENDED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROVISION OF CRITICALLY NEEDED ASSISTANCE FOR LIFE-SUPPORT IN THE EMERGENCY PHASE OF THE POST-HURRICANE SITUATION. THEY ALSO REPORTED THAT ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING WERE ALREADY UNDER WAY FOR THE POST-EMERGENCY TASK OF REBUILDING THE ECONOMY OF THE SHATTERED NORTHERN REGION. IN THEIR WORDS, " THE MAGNITUDE OF THE TASK WILL BE BEYOND THE CRIPPLED CAPACITY OF THE HONDURAN ECONOMY. HELP FROM OUTSIDE WILL BE NEEDED." THEY OUTLINED A ROLE FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THROUGH AID, IN A MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORK, AND THEY RECOMMENDED THAT AID ASSISTANCE BE ADDRESSED PRIMARILY TO THE RURAL SECTOR AND RURAL POOR WHO WERE AFFECTED SO GRIEVOUSLY. THEY ALSO SET FORTH THE VIEW THAT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE LARGER CAPITAL TRANSFERS WHICH MAY BE NECESSARY MIGHT BE

APPROPRIATELY ADDRESSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION VOTED BY THE U.S. CONGRESS ON OCT. 17 AUTHORIZES AID TO CONDUCT FURTHER RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS IN HONDURAS AS WELL AS IN BANGLADESH AND CYPRUS.

THE UNITED STATES AID MISSION IN HONDURAS IS NOW CONSULTING WITH APPROPRIATE AGENCIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS ON SPECIFIC RECOVERY PROJECTS WHERE U.S. BILATERAL

ASSISTANCE EFFORTS MIGHT BEST BE FOCUSED. PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS ARE THAT OUR RECOVERY ASSISTANCE CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY HELP THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT TO AID FARMERS REPLANT THEIR CROPS, PROVIDE MINIMAL HEALTH FACILITIES, GET AVAILABLE LABORERS OUT OF RELIEF CAMPS AND WORKING ON SMALL INFRASTRUCTURE REPAIR PROJECTS, CLEAN UP RIVER CHANNELS AND OTHER WATER COURSES, REPAIR ROADS AND BRIDGES, AND CONSTRUCT EMERGENCY HOUSING.

FINALLY, MR. CHAIRMAN, I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE MY REMARKS BY POINTING OUT THAT THIS DISASTER HAS AGAIN ESTABLISHED THE NEED FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF OFFICE (UNDRO). REPRESENTATIVES OF MY GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH UNDRO OFFICIALS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE EMERGENCY PERIOD, AND WE HAVE NOTHING UNCLASSIFIED

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BUT PRAISE AND ADMIRATION FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS THEY HAVE MADE WITHIN THEIR SHARPLY LIMITED RESOURCES. HOWEVER, THE NEED FOR GREATER, MORE EFFICIENT COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE BECOMES BOTH CLEARER AND MORE PRESSING WITH EACH NATURAL DISASTER THAT OCCURS. IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT NATIONS RESPOND GENEROUSLY TO THE PERCEIVED NEEDS OF THOSE AFFLICTED BY DISASTER.

WHAT IS NEEDED IS NOT ONLY INTERNATIONAL GENEROSITY AND COMPASSION BUT DIRECTION AND COORDINATION BY A UNDRO STAFFED WITH PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO WORK WITH A DISASTER STRICKEN GOVERNMENT AND WHO CAN TELL ALL OF US PRECISELY WHAT IS NEEDED FOR RELIEF. NOT JUST FOOD, BUT WHAT KIND OF FOOD AND HOW MUCH. NOT JUST MEDICINE, BUT WHAT KIND OF MEDICINE, AND HOW MUCH. NOT JUST TRANSPORT OR PERSONNEL OR COMMUNICATIONS BUT WHAT KIND AND HOW MUCH.

MR. CHAIRMAN, PEOPLE WHO WERE ON THE GROUND AND ACTIVE IN THE HONDURAN EMERGENCY TELL ME THAT A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF THE COMMODITY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED SO GENEROUSLY BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DONORS AROUND THE WORLD WAS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THIS PARTICULAR EMERGENCY. IN SOME CASES, I AM GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND, RECEIPT AND DISTRIBUTION OF CRITICALLY-NEEDED EMERGENCY SUPPLIES MIGHT

EVEN HAVE BEEN SLOWED DOWN BECAUSE OF THE OBSTRUCTION IN THE SUPPLY SYSTEM CAUSED BY THE PRESENCE OF QUANTITIES OF UNNECESSARY AND UNHELPFUL ITEMS. AN AUTHORITATIVE AND EFFICIENT AND EXPERIENCED AND WELL-STAFFED UNDRO WITH THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH AND COORDINATE AMONG MEMBER GOVERNMENTS THE PRECISE KINDS AND AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED IN ANY PARTICULAR DISASTER WOULD ENABLE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS EVEN MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN IT DID IN THIS CASE.

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